

Appl. No. 10/798,670
Reply to Office Action of May 18, 2005

Attorney Docket No. 2002.1054/24061.498
Customer No. 42717

Amendments To The Claims

The following list of the claims replaces all prior versions and lists of the claims in this application.

1. (Previously presented) A manufacturing equipment scheduling system for controlling run sequences of product lots to minimize low utilization rates of units of manufacturing processing equipment employed in fabricating said product lots, comprising:

a product lot sequence controller in communication with a product lot dispatch system to receive priority information of the product lots dispatched for fabrication, and in communication with an operations controller to establish an order in which said product lots are processed by units of said processing equipment, said product lot sequence controller establishing said order by performing the steps of:

- receiving a dispatch order for at least one current product lot,
- determining a priority of said current product lot,
- if said current product lot has a high priority, determining if a previous product lot remains in a selected unit of said processing equipment,
- if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, determining if said previous product lot has a normal priority,
- if said previous product lot has a normal priority, removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment,
- processing the current product lot with the high priority; and
- upon completion of processing said current product lot with high priority, continuing processing the previous product lot.

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2. (Previously presented) The manufacturing equipment scheduling system of claim 1 wherein the product lot sequence controller further establishes said order by performing the steps of:

if said current product lot has the normal priority, determining if the previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment;

if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, continuing processing said previous product lot to completion; and

processing the current product lot with the normal priority.

3. (Previously presented) The manufacturing equipment scheduling system of claim 1 wherein the product lot sequence controller further establishes said order by performing the steps of:

if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, determining if said previous product lot has a high priority;

if said previous product lot has the high priority, continuing processing said previous product lot in said selected unit of processing equipment; and

upon completion of processing said previous product lot, processing the current product lot.

4. (Previously presented) The manufacturing equipment scheduling system of claim 1 wherein performing the step of removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment includes the steps of:

commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to cease processing said previous product lot;

recording status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot, and

requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to return said previous product lot to a staging location.

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5. (Previously presented) The manufacturing equipment scheduling system of claim 4 wherein performing the step of continuing processing the previous product lot includes the steps of:

examining the status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot, requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to acquire said previous product lot from the staging location; and

commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to continue processing said previous product lot.

6. (Previously presented) The manufacturing equipment scheduling system of claim 1 further comprising:

a messaging facility connected to communicate messages between said product lot sequence controller, said units of said processing equipment, and said product lot dispatch system.

7. (Original) The manufacturing equipment scheduling system of claim 1 wherein said product lots are integrated circuit substrates and said units of said processing equipment are integrated circuit fabrication equipment.

8. (Previously presented) A method for scheduling manufacturing equipment to control run sequences of product lots to minimize low utilization rates of units of manufacturing processing equipment employed in fabricating said product lots, comprising:

communicating with a product lot dispatch system to receive priority information of the product lots dispatched for fabrication;

communicating with an operations controller to establish an order in which said product lots are processed by units of said processing equipment; and

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establishing said order by performing the steps of:
receiving a dispatch order for at least one current product lot,
determining a priority of said current product lot,
if said current product lot has a high priority, determining if a previous product lot
remains in a selected unit of said processing equipment,
if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment,
determining if said previous product lot has a normal priority;
if said previous product lot has a normal priority, removing said previous product lot
from said selected unit of processing equipment,
processing the current product lot with the high priority; and
upon completion of processing said current product lot with high priority, continuing
processing the previous product lot.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein establishing said order further
performs the steps of:

if said current product lot has the normal priority, determining if the previous product lot
remains in the selected unit of processing equipment;
if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment,
continuing processing said previous product lot to completion; and
processing the current product lot with the normal priority.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein establishing said order further
performs the steps of:

if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment,
determining if said previous product lot has a high priority;
if said previous product lot has the high priority, continuing processing said previous
product lot in said selected unit of processing equipment; and

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upon completion of processing said previous product lot, processing the current product lot.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein performing the step of removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment includes the steps of:

commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to cease processing said previous product lot;

recording status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot, and
requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to return said previous product lot to a staging location.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein performing the step of continuing processing the previous product lot includes the steps of:

examining the status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot,
requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to acquire said previous product lot from the staging location; and

commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to continue processing said previous product lot.

13. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein communicating with a product lot dispatch system is performed by the step of:

transferring messages to and from said product lot dispatch system.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein communicating with an operations controller is performed by the step of:

transferring messages to and from said operations controller.

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15. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein said product lots are integrated circuit substrates and said units of said processing equipment are integrated circuit fabrication equipment.

16. (Previously presented) An apparatus for scheduling manufacturing equipment to control run sequences of product lots to minimize low utilization rates of units of manufacturing processing equipment employed in fabricating said product lots, comprising:

means for communicating with a product lot dispatch system to receive priority information of the product lots dispatched for fabrication;

means for communicating with an operations controller to establish an order in which said product lots are processed by units of said processing equipment; and

means for establishing said order including:

means for receiving a dispatch order for at least one current product lot,

means for determining a priority of said current product lot,

means for determining if a previous product lot remains in a selected unit of said processing equipment, if said current product lot has a high priority,

means for determining if said previous product lot has a normal priority, if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment;

means for removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment, if said previous product lot has a normal priority,

processing the current product lot with the high priority; and

means for continuing processing the previous product lot, upon completion of processing said current product lot with high priority.

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17. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein means for establishing said order further includes:

- means for determining if the previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, if said current product lot has the normal priority;
- means for continuing processing said previous product lot to completion, if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment; and
- means for processing the current product lot with the normal priority.

18. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein means for establishing said order further includes:

- means for determining if said previous product lot has a high priority, if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment;
- means for continuing processing said previous product lot in said selected unit of processing equipment, if said previous product lot has the high priority; and
- means for processing the current product lot, upon completion of processing said previous product lot.

19. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein means for removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment comprises:

- means for commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to cease processing said previous product lot;
- means for recording status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot, and
- means for requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to return said previous product lot to a staging location.

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20. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein means for continuing processing the previous product lot comprises:

means for examining the status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot,

means for requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to acquire said previous product lot from the staging location; and

means for commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to continue processing said previous product lot.

21. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said means for communicating with a product lot dispatch system comprises:

means for transferring messages to and from said product lot dispatch system.

22. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said means for communicating with an operations controller includes:

means for transferring messages to and from said operations controller.

23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said product lots are integrated circuit substrates and said units of said processing equipment are integrated circuit fabrication equipment.

24. (Currently amended) A computer integrated manufacturing system that executes a program process for controlling run sequences of product lots to minimize low utilization rates of processing equipment manufacturing unit employed in fabricating said product lots, the program process comprising the steps of:

communicating with a product lot dispatch system to receive priority information of the product lots dispatched for fabrication;

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communicating with an operations controller to establish an order in which said product lots are processed by units of said processing equipment; and
establishing said order by performing the steps of:
receiving a dispatch order for at least one current product lot,
determining a priority of said current product lot,
if said current product lot has a high priority, determining if a previous product lot remains in a selected unit of said processing equipment,
if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, determining if said previous product lot ~~is~~ has a normal priority;
if said previous product lot has a normal priority, removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment,
processing the current product lot with the high priority; and
upon completion of processing said current product lot with high priority, continuing processing the previous product lot.

25. (Previously presented) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 24 wherein the step of said program process for establishing said order further performs the steps of:
if said current product lot has the normal priority, determining if the previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment;
if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, continuing processing said previous product lot to completion; and
processing the current product lot with the normal priority.

26. (Previously presented) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 24 wherein the step of said program process for establishing said order further performs the steps of:
if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, determining if said previous product lot has a high priority;

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if said previous product lot has the high priority, continuing processing said previous product lot in said selected unit of processing equipment; and
upon completion of processing said previous product lot, processing the current product lot.

27. (Previously presented) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 24 wherein the step of said program process for performing the step of removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment includes the steps of:
commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to cease processing said previous product lot;
recording status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot, and
requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to return said previous product lot to a staging location.

28. (Currently amended) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 27 wherein the step of said program process for performing the step of continuing processing the previous product lot includes the steps of:
examining the status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot,
requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to acquire said previous product lot from the staging location; and
commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to continue processing said previous product lot.

29. (Previously presented) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 24 wherein the step of said program process for communicating with a product lot dispatch system includes the step of:
transferring messages to and from said product lot dispatch system.

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30. (Previously presented) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 24 wherein the step of said program process for communicating with an operations controller is performed by the step of:

transferring messages to and from said operations controller.

31. (Original) The computer integrated manufacturing system of claim 24 wherein said product lots are integrated circuit substrates and said units of said processing equipment are integrated circuit fabrication equipment.

32. (Currently amended) A medium for retaining a computer program which, when executed by a computing system, implements a program process for controlling run sequences of product lots to minimize low utilization rates of units of manufacturing processing equipment employed in fabricating said product lots, the program process comprising the steps of:

communicating with a product lot dispatch system to receive priority information of the product lots dispatched for fabrication;

communicating with an operations controller to establish an order in which said product lots are processed by units of said processing equipment; and

establishing said order by performing the steps of:

receiving a dispatch order for at least one current product lot,

determining a priority of said current product lot,

if said current product lot has a high priority, determining if a previous product lot remains in a selected unit of said processing equipment,

if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment, determining if said previous product lot ~~is~~ has a normal priority;

if said previous product lot has a normal priority, removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of processing equipment,

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processing the current product lot with the high priority; and
upon completion of processing said current product lot with high priority, continuing
processing the previous product lot.

33. (Previously presented) The medium of claim 32 wherein the step of said program
process for establishing said order further performs the steps of:

if said current product lot has the normal priority, determining if the previous product lot
remains in the selected unit of processing equipment;

if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment,
continuing processing said previous product lot to completion; and
processing the current product lot with the normal priority.

34. (Previously presented) The medium of claim 32 wherein the step of said program
process for establishing said order further performs the steps of:

if said previous product lot remains in the selected unit of processing equipment,
determining if said previous product lot has a high priority;

if said previous product lot has the high priority, continuing processing said previous
product lot in said selected unit of processing equipment; and
upon completion of processing said previous product lot, processing the current product
lot.

35. (Previously presented) The medium of claim 32 wherein the step of said program
process for performing the step of removing said previous product lot from said selected unit of
processing equipment includes the steps of:

commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to cease processing said previous
product lot;

recording status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot, and

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requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to return said previous product lot to a staging location.

36. (Previously presented) The medium of claim 35 wherein the step of said program process for performing the step of continuing processing the previous product lot includes the steps of:

examining the status information of all pieces of product within said previous product lot,
requesting said selected unit of processing equipment to acquire said previous product lot from the staging location; and
commanding said selected unit of processing equipment to continue processing said previous product lot.

37. (Original) The medium of claim 32 wherein the step of said program process for communicating with a product lot dispatch system is performed by the step of:
transferring messages to and from said product lot dispatch system.

38. (Previously presented) The medium of claim 32 wherein the step of said program process for communicating with an operations controller is performed by the step of:
transferring messages to and from said operations controller.

39. (Original) The medium of claim 32 wherein said product lots are integrated circuit substrates and said units of said processing equipment are integrated circuit fabrication equipment.